



What does the
Bible Say about...

Social Media?



There were once two women who were living, for a time at least, in the same house. Both of them had a baby within three days of each other, and very sadly one of the babies died during the night. An argument arose between the two women over who the living baby belonged to. One woman argued the live baby was hers. The other woman argued that it was hers. 'Your baby died! You took my baby and swapped him for yours!' one cried. 'No! This is my baby. Your baby was the one that died!' No one else was in the house with them at the time so there was no witness to help them sort out this terrible and tragic argument. What should they do? They did the only thing they could do, they went to King Solomon, the wisest king in all of history.

Then the king said, 'One says, "This is my son that is alive, and your son is dead"; and the other says, 'No; but your son is dead, and my son is the living one.'" And the king said, 'Bring me a sword.' So a sword was brought before the king. And the king said, 'Divide the living child in two, and give half to one and half to the other.' Then the woman whose son was alive said to the king, because her heart yearned for her son, 'Oh, my lord, give her the living child, and by no means put him to death.' But the other said, 'He shall be neither mine nor yours; divide him.' Then the king answered and said, 'Give the living child to the first woman, and by no means put him to death; she is his mother.'

—1 Kings 3:23-27

Remember when God had appeared to Solomon and promised to give him whatever he asked for? Solomon asked for wisdom. He was wise enough to know that he was not wise enough to be king of Israel. He needed God's wisdom, and that is exactly what we see in action here: God's wisdom. Could Solomon have gone to the Holy Scriptures and

found an answer to the problem of women fighting over a baby? No. But Scripture contains principles from which we can make decisions or answer questions. How does that happen?

Let's look at a biblical principle Solomon would have known in this situation (remembering that although he did not have the Bible as we do, God gave Solomon the same wisdom that we have in our Bibles).

For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

—Matthew 6:21

Solomon knew that the woman who treasured this baby could not allow him to be harmed. That proved correct. As soon as he suggested dividing the baby in two so that both woman could have him, the true mother cried out in motherly distress. She could not allow her precious baby to be killed – even if it meant that she would not have him.

When the people in the city heard how Solomon dealt with these two women, they were amazed. No doubt they wondered, 'How did he know to suggest such a terrible thing? How did he know the real mother would never allow her baby to be killed?' But we know, don't we? God gave Solomon wisdom. And now God has given us wisdom, in the form of wise principles from His Word the Bible that we can apply to life's situations. Just as Solomon did that day.

Now, that perhaps seems a strange way to start a chapter on what the Bible teaches about social media. But actually there is a similarity between the case of the dead and living babies, and social media. Can you think what that similarity might be?

The answer is, the Bible does not speak about a 'baby-war' or about social media. But just as God gave Solomon wisdom as to how to deal

with the fighting mothers, He has also given us wisdom as to how to think about social media.

So ... let's start off with a simple question. What exactly is social media? Very basically, social media is an online 'place' that enables you to communicate with others.

Now, I don't know what rules you might have in your home about going online, but that's okay. At some point you will no doubt be online in some way, so this is just as useful for you as it is for your neighbour who maybe already has a Facebook account.

Perhaps (hopefully) your parents and your teachers have spent some time with you talking through the dangers of being online, being 'friended' by people you don't know, the bullying that can happen and the ways in which you can protect your privacy. If not, it might be a good thing for you to ask to have some time to discuss that together. So, I won't go into any of that now. Instead, we are going to take a slightly different approach.

Did You Know ...?

*According to Google, about 4 million blog posts are read everyday.
That's one post for every person in New Zealand every day!*

Facebook has said that there are over one billion regular Facebook users. That is about the same number as the population of the continent of Africa. Wow! And what is Facebook? It's just a place where you can share whatever you like, including photos of what you did today and what you had for dinner! You are free to write whatever is on your mind, and post it. Boom! As soon as you push 'post', everyone who is allowed access to your account suddenly has your words and photos on their 'news feed' (a

page which shows all their friends' posts). It is a wonderful way to keep in touch with people who don't live local to you (and even those who do). But it has its pitfalls too.

Blogging is another way to keep in touch. Some people use a blog as a diary – perhaps your class at school does this. It allows parents to see some of what you are up to each day. It can be a lot of fun. But just as with Facebook, as soon as you push 'post', your words and images are 'out there' for the world to see.

So if social media is so fun, why do we need principles from the Bible to help us to think about how we use it? Well, let's see....

Let's look at the 'treasure principle' that we spoke of earlier in the chapter and see how it applies to social media.

For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

—Matthew 6:21

You might be wondering if it does in fact apply to social media. But trust me, it does. One of the things about social media is that it is a two-way communication. Whether you are on Facebook or on a blog, or some other online 'place', when you post something, others have the opportunity to respond by writing something back or by 'liking' it. This is where a problem might arise. When someone writes a nice comment back, or pushes 'like', it feels pretty good. Sometimes it might even feel great. So then we might be tempted to write or post other things that will get more 'nice' responses from people. We can become like those who treasure the approval of others more than anything else. So we try to anticipate what people will like to see from us, instead of just being ourselves. We find our treasure in 'being liked' by others and for some people it becomes a serious thing that they can't live without. And the opposite is true also. If someone makes an unkind comment back, it

can be very hurtful and cause you to want to respond in anger and/or write things that make people say nice things to make you feel better.

What about 'selfies'? Many find their treasure in how they look. Often the first place a selfie picture goes is online. Recently, our family went for a big walk up to the top of a mountain. It's not a huge walk and there are a lot of people who do it each day for fitness, but it's worth doing just for the views; they are breath taking. So we reached the top of the mountain where there is a large grassy area. My husband, our five children and I all sat down and got out the water bottles. We were just quietly enjoying the view when I realised that we were the only ones not taking selfies. And straight away, many of them were posted online. I can imagine the comments that came back: 'Wow, you are amazing, I could never have done that!' or 'Wow, you're looking awesome!', or 'Wow, I wish I was there.' All comments that make the 'model' feel great and popular and lucky! We need to be careful Where our treasure is, there our heart will be also. Make sure your heart is not looking for the approval of others rather than the approval of God.

Keep your heart with all vigilance, for from it flows the springs of life.

—Proverbs 4:23

But how do we do that?

Jesus said to him, 'I am the way, the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.'

—John 14:6

What does vigilance mean? It means to keep a watch out for danger. So this verse from Proverbs is telling us to keep a watch out for things that are a danger to our hearts (minds). Why? Because from it flow springs of life.

We need to make Jesus our treasure because He is life. How do we make Jesus our treasure? By believing in Him as our Saviour, turning from our sin and following Him all the days of our lives. Only then will life flow from our hearts. Be sure to treasure the right thing (Jesus), and then be on guard against things that might cause you to make something else your treasure in Jesus' place.

But wait, there's more!

What other Principles can we Learn from Scripture?

There are so many principles that we could apply to how we use and think about social media. I'll share just a few more.



1. Watch your words

Let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how you ought to answer each person.

—Colossians 4:6

It's interesting that salt should be used to season our speech, isn't it? But salt has some very handy uses. It can preserve food to keep it from rotting. It can make food tastier by bringing out flavour. It can be used to clean things, and it can even be used to heal wounds! How does this relate to how we use words? We need to keep our words from hurting, destroying or overpowering others. Instead they should bless, and preserve

▼ [more...](#)

people's feelings. They should add graciousness, kindness, gentleness and compassion to conversations.

2. Be slow to speak

Know this, my beloved brothers: let every person be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger.

—James 1:19

What does this mean? It means you should take your time in chatting, sharing and posting. Once you have shared something online, it's too late to take it back. Even if you delete it, people may have already seen it. And actually you can never really delete anything online. It's possible someone has copied it, shared it, snapchatted it, forwarded it to others. There are so many ways that your private words and photos can be shared with others who you never wanted to share them with. Take your time and think carefully before you push 'post'.

But what if someone has posted something that makes you angry? Look at the above verse again. It not only says that we are to be slow to be angry, but also that we are to be quick to listen. Maybe you need to go and talk to your parents about it and be quick to listen to their advice.

3. Zip your lips

When words are many, transgression is not lacking, but whoever restrains his lips is prudent.

—Proverbs 10:19

▼ [more...](#)

Transgression is another word for sin. The idea is that if we let loose with our tongue, it won't be long before we say things we shouldn't be saying. Choose your words carefully and keep a tight rein on how much you speak.

4. Watch the time

¹⁵ Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise but as wise, ¹⁶ making the most of the time, because the days are evil.

—Ephesians 5:15-16

Whenever we do something fun the time just whizzes away. Keep social media in perspective. While it can be fun to enjoy it for a bit, there are so many more things which are better to spend your time on. Enjoy 'real' activities, not just online ones. Ride your bike, paint a sunset, read a great book, play with your siblings, help make dinner, fold some laundry, hang out with your parents.... Keep it real and make the most of your time.

5. Invest in others

So then, as we have opportunity, let us do good to everyone, and especially those who are of the household of faith.

—Galatians 6:10

Being online can sometimes cause us to be like those horses who wear blinkers to keep them focussed. We can forget that those around us are real people with real needs as we have our heads down and eyes focussed on the screen. But the Bible commands all Christians to 'do good', especially to other Christians. It can be pretty hard to do good when our eyes are focussed on a screen.

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6. Be an example

Let no one despise you for your youth, but set the believers an example in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith, in purity.

—1 Timothy 4:12

As I write, I am thinking about all sorts of terrible things that are happening online that young people are involved in. Much of it happens because of peer pressure – the pressure to be involved in something even though it might be wrong or inappropriate. Maybe inappropriate photos or videos are being shared. Or perhaps there is bullying, or the pressure to sign up for something that you don't want to do. Or it might be expressing attitudes which dishonour families and God. Whatever is going on, be an example. Sometimes the best example is to just walk away from whatever is going on. Other times we need to speak up. It's a hard thing to do, but we can follow the example of Jesus, who was always the best example for us to follow.

7. Know when to sign off

Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of scoffers.

—Psalm 1:1

If you are already allowed to use social media, you might find (as with any kind of friendship) that the influence, distraction or temptation you experience from it means that you need to stop using it. The Bible says that the person who does not walk with those who do not love God is blessed.

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You could swap out the word 'blessed' for 'right' (from the original Hebrew of the word blessed). It is right to not walk in the way of those who don't love God. It honours God, it protects you and it is an example to others.

These are just some of the principles that Scripture has for us in our daily living that we can apply to our use of social media. They are important and precious principles because they are God's Words to us.



What have we Learnt about Social Media?



1. Social media is another way people communicate. It's instant, it can be fun—but it can also be dangerous.
2. Social media can become a problem when it causes us to treasure it above all else.
3. We can and should guard our hearts, making sure that Jesus is our treasure – not how many people like what we are sharing.
4. We using social media we should:
 - Watch our words
 - Be slow to speak
 - Zip our lips
 - Watch the time
 - Invest in others
 - Be an example
 - Know when to sign off

When words are many, transgression is not lacking, but whoever restrains his lips is prudent.

—Proverbs 10:19

Study Questions

Let's look at the 'Zip your lips' principle.



Look at the verse below and list what sorts of wrong can come out of our mouths, and write a definition for each one:

For I fear that perhaps when I come I may find you not as I wish, and that you may find me not as you wish – that perhaps there may be quarrelling, jealousy, anger, hostility, slander, gossip, conceit, and disorder.

—2 Corinthians 12:20

Sometimes on social media, it's easy to feel a little more 'brave' or more 'independent from the household rules' than you would if you were talking to people in a face-to-face manner. And sometimes this means that things get written and posted that you would not say, if your parents were standing right there with you.

1. Have you ever posted something online that you regretted later?

What effects did it have on your friendships/relationships?

Why did you regret it?

What have you learnt in this chapter that might encourage you now not to post such things again?

2. Imagine you were going to rewrite that sentence above (taken from a letter to the Corinthian church) but instead started it with:

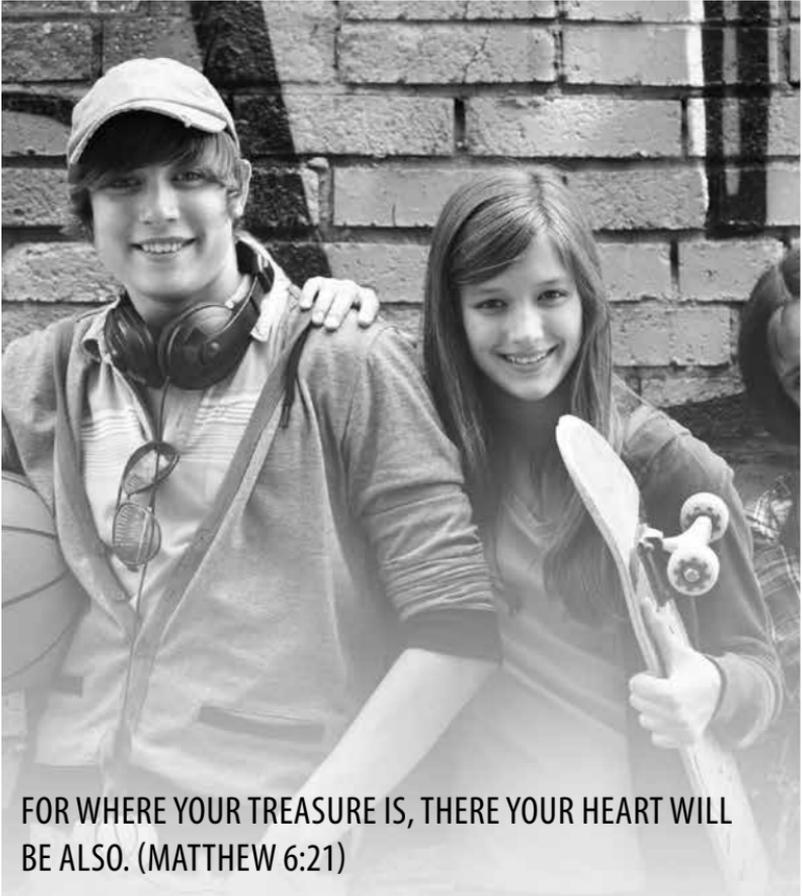
▼ *more...*

“For I hope that when I come I will find you as I wish, and that you will find me as you wish – that perhaps there may be ...”

3. What good/positive words would you want to complete the second half of the verse?
4. Why would you choose these words?
5. If you were to use social media, do these words describe what you hope your parents would find if they looked at your account?
6. What principles have you learnt from this chapter that will help you to achieve that?
7. What principles would you find the hardest to do?
8. Are there any changes that you can tell you already need to make in the way you use or think about social media? If yes, what?

Let's Pray Together

Dear God, thank you for technology, which allows us to keep in touch with friends all over the world, to have fun on different online sites, and to connect with people in a different way. With it, we know there are also some dangers. Please give us wisdom when we are online, protect us from those who would want to harm us and help us to keep ourselves safe. Please help us in our contacts with people to be wise, loving and true to you. May the principles we have read today be a guide as we make our way in the online world. Amen.



FOR WHERE YOUR TREASURE IS, THERE YOUR HEART WILL BE ALSO. (MATTHEW 6:21)

LET NO ONE DESPISE YOU FOR YOUR YOUTH, BUT SET THE BELIEVERS AN EXAMPLE IN SPEECH, IN CONDUCT, IN LOVE, IN FAITH, IN PURITY. (1 TIMOTHY 4:12)

BLESSED IS THE MAN WHO WALKS NOT IN THE COUNSEL OF THE WICKED, NOR STANDS IN THE WAY OF SINNERS, NOR SITS IN THE SEAT OF SCOFFERS. (PSALM 1:1)

MY ACTION PLAN

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.